

Reference: 01716803

Information Requests  
[information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)

21 November 2023

### Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning smoking complaints in 'The Simpsons'. Your request was received on 14 November 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the "FOI Act").

### Background

Before responding to your question, we would like to provide some background information on Ofcom's complaints procedures and reporting.

Complaints about content standards are handled under *Ofcom's Procedures for investigating breaches of content standards for television and radio*<sup>1</sup>.

Individual complaints received by Ofcom are assigned to cases. A case is opened when Ofcom is assessing a specific programme or issue and may consist of one or more complaints.

Ofcom assesses every complaint it receives. Based on an initial assessment of the complaint and a consideration of the related content, Ofcom will consider whether there may have been a breach of the Broadcasting Code (or other Ofcom codes or licence conditions). In cases where Ofcom considers there may have been a breach, it will launch an investigation. The possible outcomes of an investigation are that we judge an issue is **in breach**, **resolved** or **not in breach** of our rules.

Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin, published every fortnight on our website, includes decisions about the complaints we have considered. The Bulletin covers a range of cases, including those which Ofcom has escalated for full investigation, and those which, after careful assessment, Ofcom has decided not to pursue because they did not raise issues warranting investigation. The Bulletins can be accessed via the following link to our website: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/bulletins/broadcast-bulletins>

We log complaints on our complaints database by category of the complaint issue (with reference to the rules in our codes). Complaints about smoking would usually be logged under the category "Drugs, smoking, solvents or alcohol", but there is no specific category (or rule) used exclusively for

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<sup>1</sup> Available at:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/guidance/procedures>

smoking. We do not therefore hold searchable information on complaints to enable us to filter large volumes of cases specifically about smoking in isolation from drugs, solvents or alcohol.

## Your request & our response

*Up to date information about the number of complaints received by Ofcom related to smoking in the show The Simpsons since it aired in 1989 (or whenever info is available) as follows:*

*1. How many complains has the TV show received for smoking (breakdown per season)*

Ofcom's database runs from January 2014, and our records show four complaints about *The Simpsons* logged under the category Drugs, smoking, solvents or alcohol from that date to 14 November 2023, with only one of those complaints related to smoking in an episode broadcast on Sky1 on 9 September 2018.

*2. How many complaints has the most recent season had for smoking*

No complaints.

*3. What are the top 10 most complained about TV shows for smoking? Which one of those are available for kids?*

The following table lists the most complained about programmes over time with complaints logged under the category Drugs, smoking, solvents or alcohol from 1 January 2014 to 14 November 2023. As indicated above, not all of these complaints may relate to smoking exclusively. All these programmes were broadcast on freely accessible channels.

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Record Count</b>
<i>Coronation Street</i>	360
<i>Emmerdale</i>	135
<i>Love Island</i>	82
<i>The X Factor</i>	35
<i>This Morning</i>	27
<i>EastEnders</i>	24
<i>Celebrity Big Brother</i>	23
<i>Good Morning Britain</i>	21
<i>The Brit Awards 2023</i>	20
<i>Celebrity Gogglebox</i>	18

If you have any further queries, then please send them to [information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

## Information Requests

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

**Timing**

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact [information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF